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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8322
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 2007

In Today's Papers

Turkey Uneasy over Jewish Group's Recognition of Armenian Genocide

All papers report that during a meeting yesterday Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul told Pinhas Avivi, the Israeli ambassador to Ankara, of Turkey's disappointment over the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) decision to call the mass killing of Armenians by Ottoman Turkish forces during World War I genocide. Gul urged Israel to use its influence over the Jewish lobby groups in the US. According to Hurriyet, Avivi told Gul that Israel was disturbed by the change in the attitude of the ADL, stressing there is no change in the Israeli government's position with regard to the incidents of 1915. During a phone talk with Israeli President Shimon Peres yesterday, Prime Minister Erdogan expressed Turkey's concern over the ADL decision. Peres reportedly pledged to do his best in support of Turkey.

Sabah reports that the ADL retreated after Turkey's initiatives and released a new statement proposing the establishment of a joint commission for the investigation of genocide claims, "to assist the parties in achieving a resolution of their profound differences." Milliyet believes the statement came as a result of Israel's intervention "to adjust the attitudes of the Jewish lobby." Cumhuriyet sees the AKP policy in support of Hamas as being the main reason for the change seen in the attitude of the Jewish lobby groups.

Editorial Commentary on the Armenian Issue

Ergun Babahan writes in the mainstream daily Sabah: "It is no secret that Turkey-Iran economic and military rapprochement has created uneasiness both in Israel and the US. The Iran gas deal was realized despite Washington's objection. Iran remains the number one enemy for Israel because of its open support for Hizbullah in Lebanon. Let's remember that President Bush declared three countries the 'axis of evil' prior to the Iraq war. After that, Iraq was invaded, compromise was reached with North Korea and now only Iran remains. Thus it comes as no surprise that American Jewish organizations have suddenly changed their stance and started

calling the Armenian deportation genocide. The Jewish community has lived in this region in peace with Turkey. Given the regional circumstances, Israel has no friend other than Turkey. Turkey and Israel are involved in military and strategic engagements. This current situation will harm Israel more than Turkey as Israel's good relationship with a non-Arab Muslim country will deteriorate."

Ismet Berkan writes in the liberal-intellectual daily Radikal: "With the ADL's decision the pending Armenian Genocide Resolution in the Congress has gained more ground. We have to realize that almost every negative about Turkey stems from Turkey's lack of strategic thinking and long term planning. Turkey should have been capable of handling this issue when it first emerged in early 1970s. If Turkey had been able to stand up and apologize for the 1915 events and tragedy during the Ottoman Empire time, the international community would not be so negative about us. By doing that Turkey would have been able to debate the issue in a non-emotional, healthy fashion. On the contrary, Turkey displayed a defensive attitude rather than strategic thinking. We were captivated by fears, and now we see that our fears are haunting us. Even if we assume that the entire world is wrong and hostile, can we still say that Turkey did no wrong in this situation?"

Iraqi VP Meets Erdogan, Gul during Turkey Visit

All papers report the Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi came Thursday to Ankara to seek support for resolving disagreements between the Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish group in the Iraqi government.

Hashimi told reporters on his arrival the Iraqi government was clear in its intention to put into practice the Turkey-Iraq memorandum of understanding signed during a recent visit to Turkey by Prime Minister al-Maliki. Hashimi later met with Prime Minister Erdogan and asked for the PM's help in returning Sunnis to the

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government. Erdogan reportedly declined to put forth concrete proposals, but said he was ready to help Iraqi groups work out sectarian differences. PKK terror was not raised during talks with the Iraqi VP since Hashimi is known to be a figure who shares Turkey's views. Hashimi leaves Turkey today after a morning meeting with Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul.

MFA Note to US on Cyprus Oil

Mainstream Hurriyet reports that Turkey gave the US a diplomatic note to express Turkey's disturbance regarding the US-based Noble Energy's bid on Greek Cypriot Oil exploration. The US Administration responded to Ankara's initiative by saying that it was a business issue and that US companies do not need the administration's permission to make international bids. Reportedly, Turkey plans to get in touch directly with Nobel Energy to explain the Cyprus issue in detail and the drawbacks of engaging in such exploration.

Reports on Iranian Army Crossing the Border with Iraq

Vatan, Yeni Safak, Cumhuriyet and others: Iraqi Kurdish party KDP's Peyamner website site claimed that Iranian troops penetrated five kilometers into Iraqi territory, causing massive material damage.

TV Highlights

NTV, 7.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- The Turkish Parliament prepares for the second round of voting in the presidential election on Friday. CHP leader Deniz Baykal said his party has not decided whether or not to participate in the presidential oath taking ceremony in the parliament, expected to be held after the third round August 28.

- The ruling AKP plans special ceremonies to celebrate the presidency of Abdullah Gul all around Turkey.

- Professor Ergun Ozbudun said a new constitutional draft trims down the powers of the president and ensures full compliance with EU standards in basic rights and freedoms.

- The Turkish Contractors' Association said the number of Turkish

contractor companies among the world's 225 leading companies rose to 22 this year.

International News

- President Bush told a group of veterans "a free Iraq" is within reach and warned that if Americans retreat, death and suffering of the sort not seen since the Vietnam War would be witnessed.
- French President Sarkozy has completed his first 100 days in office on Thursday still riding high in opinion polls despite disappointing economic figures.
- Pakistan's Supreme Court ruled on Thursday that Pakistan's exiled former PM Nawaz Sharif could return home after seven years in exile.
- Turkey has the lowest women's labor force participation rate in the OECD, at 27 percent, which activists attribute at least in part to headscarf restrictions.

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